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Bohls: Westlake team that won second straight title is one of the best of all time

Austin American-Statesman

Wednesday, January 20, 2021 | statesman.com | @statesman | Facebook.com/statesman | $2

On guard in Washington

National Guard troops on Tuesday reinforce the security zone on Capitol Hill before Joe Biden is sworn in as the 46th president today. At least 12 National Guard members have been removed from inauguration security duty after vetting by the FBI, Pentagon officials say. STORY, A9 [J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS]

Local leaders focus on better vaccine rollout

By Heather Osbourne
Austin American-Statesman
USA TODAY NETWORK

Austin-Travis County health officials said Tuesday the spread of the coronavirus locally is starting to level out, allowing health care workers to focus more on vaccinating residents in the coming weeks.

Austin Public Health Director Stephanie Hayden-Howard and Dr. Mark Escott, interim Austin-Travis County health authority, on Tuesday updated the Austin City Council and Travis County commissioners on the latest coronavirus data and trends. But they spent much of the meeting focused on vaccine distribution in the Austin area, where many of the city and county leaders questioned the efficiency of the local vaccine rollout.

Inside

- Abbott touts Texas vaccine distribution, **B1**
- Williamson County to get 6,000 vaccine doses Wednesday, **B1**

As Austin Public Health this week distributes its second shipment of 12,000 initial doses of the coronavirus vaccine, local leaders were concerned that qualifying Austin-area residents wouldn't be contacted for an appointment because of ongoing technical issues.

Many Austin-Travis County residents complained last week that the new Austin Public Health pre-registration site would repeatedly crash as they tried to sign up for a vaccine shot.

See VACCINE, A4

Texans from both parties set to attend inauguration

Ceremony will look different, from face masks to security

By Maria Recio
American-Statesman Correspondent
USA TODAY NETWORK

WASHINGTON — Just two weeks after diving to the floor in the House galleries in fear for her life during an attack by President Donald Trump's supporters, U.S. Rep. Veronica Escobar, D-El Paso, will return Wednesday to the U.S. Capitol for the inauguration of Joe Biden.

"It's very important that we continue the tradition," Escobar told the American-Statesman, of participating in the historic swearing-in ceremony.

A smattering of Texas lawmakers, Democrats and Republicans, will attend in person for what will be an inauguration that will look very different from previous editions: from the mandatory face coverings to protect from the pandemic to the heightened security after the Jan. 6 riot.

U.S. Sens. John Cornyn, R-Texas, and Ted Cruz, R-Texas, will attend, as will U.S. Reps. Lloyd Doggett, D-Austin, Roger Williams, R-Austin, Michael McCaul, R-Austin, Tony Gonzales, R-San Antonio, and Henry Cuellar, D-Laredo.

"Though this militarized setup looks like no inauguration ever before, Trump's insurrectionists could not stop us from participating in celebration of this new day for America," Doggett told the American-Statesman.

McCaul said: "The U.S. presidential inauguration is a time when America reminds the world what democracy looks like;the presidential office doesn't rest with one individual,butratherwith the very ideals of our free nation. The peaceful transition of power sends a strong message to the world that, no matter what, America values democracy and that free and fair elections work."

McCaul was one of just a handful of Texas Republicans to vote in favor of the Electoral College results from Arizona and Pennsylvania, battleground states won by Biden.

Inside

- Westlake teacher featured in Biden inauguration, **B1**
- Austin police on 'tactical alert' for Inauguration Day, **B1**

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Biden urged to end wall project

Coalition calls on new administration to cancel construction contracts for border barrier

By John C. Moritz
USA TODAY NETWORK

Upon assuming the presidency, Joe Biden should fulfill his campaign pledge to end construction of the barriers separating the United States from Mexico and cancel any related contract with private companies for building new sections, representatives from a border and immigration advocacy group said Tuesday.

"We've got a simple and clear message for incoming President Joe Biden: Be a hero for the border," said Tricia Cortez, executive director of the Rio Grande International Study Center in Laredo, who is part of a new organization called Not Another Foot. "Show us that you care and that we matter."

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INSIDE | A5

MCCONELL: TRUMP 'PROVOKED' CAPITOL RIOT; MOB 'FED LIES'

Senate GOP leader delivers rebuke ahead of Trump's historic second impeachment trial

Austin camping ban could be on May ballot

The Austin City Council repealed the public camping ban in June 2019. [RICARDO B. BRAZZIELL/ AMERICAN-STATESMAN FILE]

By Ryan Autullo
Austin American-Statesman
USA TODAY NETWORK

After failing last year to reinstate the city's homeless camping ban, an Austin group says it has collected the required number of petition signatures to bring the issue before voters in May.

Save Austin Now says it turned in more than 24,000 signatures to the city clerk Tuesday, continuing its push to overturn a 2019 Austin City Council vote that repealed the city's public camping ordinance.

The signatures still must be validated by the clerk's office to verify that at least 20,000 of them came from registered voters living in the city. Save Austin Now says it validated every signature it turned in and discarded about 6,000 others it could not validate.

If approved by the clerk, language that would allow voters to reinstate the camping ban would go on the May 1 ballot.

"Residents should be able to walk to a park, or to school, or to their car without being accosted or feeling unsafe," Save Austin Now co-founder Cleo Petricek said in a written statement. "Our city leaders have not listened to the residents. Now residents can have their voice heard. We all want a safe city and we all should demand a safe neighborhood. Restoring the camping ban will save our city."

See CAMPING, A10

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TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Few Showers	*Showers*	*Some Sunshine*
56° / 51°	*69° / 57°*	*73° / 53°*